

MOVING TOWARDS A CLEAN
DIAMOND TRADE**HON. SAM FARR**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 27, 2001

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Representatives HALL, WOLF and HOUGHTON for putting together this compromise bill with the Administration. It is important that we enact legislation to reform the conflict-driving diamond trade, and this is an important first step.

Mr. Speaker, for years terrorist bands masquerading as political rebels have been using income from the illicit trade in diamonds to fund their attacks on civilian populations. The scars that they have left are deep. They are seen every where on the mangled limbs and faces of men, women and children on the streets of Monrovia and Freetown.

As appalling as the profiteering of these groups, is the commercial support that they have received from brokers in the legitimate diamond trade in what we refer to as the developed world. While some of these traders have dealt unknowingly in these blood diamonds, others have consciously taken advantage of their market position to "launder" these tainted goods. There is a clear need to establish a system which punishes those that are supporting terrorist bands that profit from diamond trading, and prevent dirty diamonds from entering the market which make legitimate dealers unwittingly complicit.

The substitute for H.R. 2722 that we have before us is not perfect, but it is an important first step in creating such a system. Moreover, passing this bill will send a clear signal to those states, industries and NGOs participating in the Kimberly Process, that the United States is serious about Clean Diamonds. I am confident that this bill will help move the Kimberly agenda forward, and that concrete steps to implement a verification system will be agreed to by all participating parties. This, after all, is the key. A verification system will not work unless it has the support of all those concerned.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to continue to work towards making the diamond industry one that supports trade and economic development without compromising human rights.

H.R. 3206, THE "HOME OWNERSHIP
EXPANSION AND OPPORTUNITIES
ACT"**HON. JAMES H. MALONEY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 27, 2001

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to make a brief statement about my cosponsorship of H.R. 3206, the "Home Ownership Expansion and Opportunities Act."

By cosponsoring this legislation, I am expressing my support for new ideas to provide additional opportunities for homeownership. This legislation is intended to bring more competition into the secondary mortgage marketplace, the result of which will be more opportunities and lower costs for homebuyers.

The "Home Ownership Expansion and Opportunities Act" would allow the Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA) to guarantee the securities of conventional mortgages above the 85 percent loan to value ratio, up to the statutory conventional mortgage limit. In case of default, the participating private mortgage insurance companies (PMIs) would bear the first level of loss.

Of course, our current mortgage financing system works well. After all, homeownership in the United States is at an all time high. Any system can be improved, however, so long as no industry or company is ceded any structural competitive advantage.

Like any legislation, this proposal takes calculated risks to achieve demonstrable gains. First, the federal government will guarantee these mortgages. I see no reason, therefore, why we wouldn't see to it that certain affordable housing goals are met and enforced. In doing so we will ensure that all American's have access to affordable financing so they can realize their dream of home ownership.

Additionally, because the federal government will be taking on some of the risk associated with these mortgages, we must ensure that the program is managed in the most fiscally prudent manner. That is why the legislation includes a provision that any PMI participant receive an AA rating or better from a nationally recognized rating agency, and must meet additional requirements as determined by the Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA). While the PMIs are regulated at the state level, we may want to consider additional safety and soundness mechanisms, to further minimize the risk to taxpayers.

I look forward to working with my colleagues as this proposal moves through the legislative process. This bill serves as a starting point to begin the debate on how best to accomplish our goal of increasing homeownership for all Americans.

GUILLERMO A. GOMEZ: TEACHER
OF EXCELLENCE**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 27, 2001

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, I rise today to recognize and honor Guillermo A. Gomez, a sixth-grade bilingual teacher at Vista Square Elementary School in Chula Vista, California.

Mr. Gomez was nominated by the California Teachers Association (CTA) for the prestigious National Education Association Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. He was the only California teacher, chosen from a pool of more than 300,000 educators, to represent our state of California. Although he was not the final winner, his nomination is a glowing tribute to his service to our children.

CTA President Wayne Johnson's nomination letter includes the following information about Mr. Gomez and his achievements: "CTA conducted a search for nominees for this prestigious award. Many excellent California teachers were nominated, but Mr. Gomez stood head and shoulders above the rest. Not only is he an excellent teacher, but he is also an inspiring one. He created an after-school program called Circle of Little Brothers and Circle

of Little Sisters, where he helps upper-elementary students explore possibilities for their futures. He coordinates an after-school homework center and takes the lead in training staff on English language development standards.

Becoming concerned that there were few males, especially of Latino descent, who were involved in a school with many Latino children, Mr. Gomez, along with another teacher, created a group called "Mi Papa" in the community resource center. This program helps bring fathers into the school community as role models and pairs them with children in educational and art activities.

Despite the fact that he has been a teacher for only six years, Mr. Gomez is active in his local CTA chapter, Chula Vista Educators. He serves on many communities and, as an association representative, he kept teachers in his school informed and focused during recent negotiations with the school district. He is also the chair of the political action committee for his local association. In short, CTA believes that Mr. Gomez exemplifies all the qualities that are present in the best teachers: dedication, caring, innovation and creativity, and teaching excellence."

Both Marilyn Prall, Principal, and Martha Deichler, Associate Principal of his school, who was Mr. Gomez' mentor, attest to his efforts to grow professionally and to become the best teacher possible—asking for advice, taking suggestions, and making them work in his own classroom. They believe that his passion for teaching has enabled him to become the excellent teacher he is today.

Mr. Gomez also works outside the classroom walls with the families of his students. He believes that only as an active social agent in the community can a teacher provide opportunities for students to advance in this competitive society. He participates in literacy nights, harvest carnivals, job-a-thons, and fundraising activities, such as car washes and haunted houses, to make sure that all of his students can go to sixth grade camp. In his "spare time", he also coaches soccer!

Mr. Gomez' public service goes beyond his local community. He and his students are often involved in charitable activities to help victims of natural disasters thousands of miles away. He is compassionate and appreciative of all people and cultures. His students know that he cares deeply about them and their families, and they return year after year to visit Mr. Gomez after their elementary school graduation.

Mr. Gomez is a graduate of San Diego State University (SDSU) and holds a Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language Academic Development multiple subject credential. He will receive his Master's Degree in Latin American studies from SDSU this coming summer. In addition, he regularly attends Saturday workshops, after-school in servicing training, and district workshops. He reads professionally and implements in his classroom the methods and ideas supported by current research.

Mr. Gomez knows the abilities of each and every one of his students and works to help each child achieve his or her full potential. He is proud to be a teacher, and I am proud that he is a teacher in my Congressional District. He will be honored by the National Education Association Foundation for the Improvement of Education in Washington, DC on December 6, 2001.